

Message Text

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42

ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02 SIL-01 LAB-01 OPR-01 A-01 SY-04

/082 W

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R 071347Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9924

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, KE

SUBJECT: KENYATTA PROROGUES PARLIAMENT ON ITS OPENING DAY

REF: NAIROBI 8653

SUMMARY: PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY MAY BE IN FOR ROUGH SLEDDING IN KENYA. ON ITS NOV. 6 OPENING DAY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TESTED WILLS WITH PRESIDENT KENYATTA'S GOVERNMENT OVER THE ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY SPEAKER AND WAS IMMEDIATELY PROROGUED INDEFINITELY. FURTHER CONFRONTATIONS WITH LABOR AND STUDENTS MAY ALSO LIE AHEAD. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S OPENING ON NOV. 6 WENT SMOOTHLY ENOUGH, WITH NEW MP'S BEING SWORN IN AND FORMER SPEAKER F.M. MATI BEING RE-ELECTED BY ACCLAMATION, UNTIL THE GOVERNMENT TRIED TO PUT OFF THE ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY SPEAKER. APPARENTLY THE ONLY CANDIDATE TO HAVE FILED PAPERS FOR THIS POSITION WAS JOHN SERONEY, MP FROM TINDERET WHO IS NOT ONLY THE ASSEMBLY'S

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LEADING CONSTITUTIONAL EXPERT BUT IS ALSO AN ARCH-OPPONENT OF

VICE PRESIDENT MOI, A FELLOW KALENJIN. SERONEY'S MANY SUPPORTERS KEPT INSISTING THAT THE HOUSE MUST MOVE THE ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY SPEAKER, LEAVING THE GOVERNMENT LITTLE CHOICE (GIVEN ITS SURPRISING LACK OF PREPARATION) BUT TO PROROGUE THE ASSEMBLY IN ORDER TO HAVE TIME TO LOBBY FOR A CANDIDATE OF ITS OWN.

2. COMMENT: THE BROAD SUPPORT EVIDENT FOR SERONEY WITHIN THE ASSEMBLY SUGGESTS THAT IT WILL NOT ACCEPT A GOVT. CANDIDATE WITHOUT A FIGHT. IF SUFFICIENTLY PROVOKED, KENYATTA MAY SOLVE THE PROBLEM BY DISPENSING WITH THE ASSEMBLY ALTOGETHER. HE WOULD PRESUMABLY BE ENCOURAGED TO DO SO NOT ONLY BY MOI, BUT ALSO BY ATTORNEY GENERAL NJONJO, WITH WHOM SERONEY HAS TANGLED IN THE PAST ON CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES.

3. AS THE PROROGUING INDICATES, THE GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY IN NO MOOD TO ALLOW DISSENT. RATHER THAN TRYING TO CO-OPT CRITICS AS PREVIOUSLY BY MAKING THEM ASST. MINISTERS, THE PRESIDENT, IN FORMULATING HIS NEW CABINET, POINTEDLY DROPPED SUCH QTE MAVERICKS UNQTE AS J.M. KARIUKI, CHARLES RUBIA AND MARTIN SHIKUKU. IN HIS OCT. 20 KENYATTA DAY ADDRESS ANJ AGAIN ON NOV. 5 WHEN HE WAS SWORN IN, THE PRESIDENT WARNED THAT HE WILL NOT TOLERATE OBSTRUCTIONISTS. MOI, ON NOV. 2, LASHED OUT AT THOSE WHO PAY QTE LIP-SERVICE LOYALTY UNQTE TO KENYATTA AND THREATENED, AS MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS, TO ROOT OUT SUCH ELEMENTS.

4. BUT DISSENT IS GROWING AS WORLD ECONOMIC REALITIES BEGIN TO BITE IN KENYA, HIGHLIGHTING INCOME DISPARITIES AND CORRUPTION. LABOR UNIONS, FACED WITH SPIRALING INFLATION, HAVE NOT WELCOMED A RECENT LABOR MINISTRY STATEMENT THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO FOREGO WAGE INCREASES THIS YEAR. STUDENT PROBLEMS ARE BEING HELD AT AN ARM'S LENGTH BY THE CONTINUED CLOSURE OF THE UNIVERSITY, BUT ARE EXPECTED TO ERUPT AGAIN WHEN IT REOPENS IN JANUARY DESPITE NEW, STRICTER STUDENT REGULATIONS. FURTHER CONFRONTATIONS WOULD THEREFORE SEEM INEVITABLE. THE EVENTS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S OPENING DAY SUGGEST THEY MAY COME SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.
MARSHALL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: Izenbel0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974NAIROB09354
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740320-0856
From: NAIROBI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741163/aaaacbjz.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: NAIROBI 8653
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: Izenbel0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <31 MAR 2003 by Izenbel0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KENYATTA PROROGUES PARLIAMENT ON ITS OPENING DAY
TAGS: PGOV, KE, (KENYATTA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005